

# Finding your Purpose

## *Creating and Sustaining a Culture for Learning*



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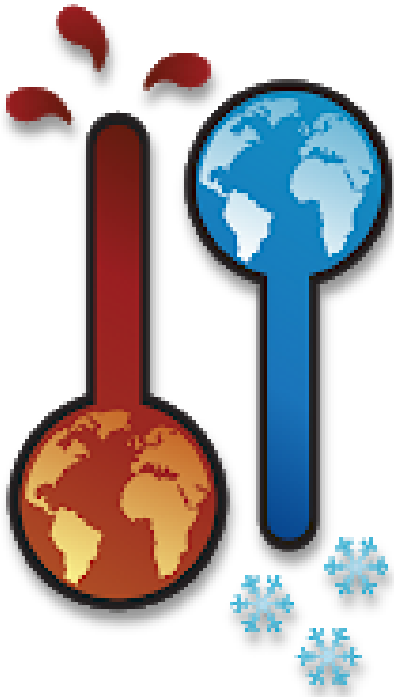


WHY  
ARE  
WE  
HERE?

## This session's goals:

- Identify the differences between climate and culture
- Define how a culture for learning looks at multiple levels in a school organization
- Evaluate your own culture for learning
- Identify some actions you can quickly implement for fostering a culture for learning

# What is Climate?



The quality and character of school life. It is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. It is based on primarily on perceptions.

*In schools, it is the attitude, collective mood, morale, tone or “feel” of the school.*

(National School Climate Center and other compiled definitions)





# What is Culture?

The characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people. It includes their beliefs, values, habits, attitudes, behaviors, actions. In individuals it can include your traditions, stories, and goals. It shapes your identity and makes up who you are, what you believe, and what you do. These characteristics then serve to create collective identifies.

*In schools, it is “the way we do things here.”*

*(definition compiled from multiple sources)*

# Climate and Culture comparison



## Climate

- Attitude/Feeling
- Based on perception
- Is all around us
- The way we feel around here
- Written, explicit expectations
- Flexible, easy to change

## Culture

- Personality
- Based on values and beliefs
- Is a part of us
- The way we do things around here
- Unwritten rules or expectations
- Takes many years to evolve

How's the  
weather in  
your world?

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# What's your culture?

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# Climate vs. Culture: Why it matters

- Climate characteristics can become the school culture over time.
- Climate can be leveraged to change the culture
- Climate changes can be the first step in the improvement process
- Easier to change a school climate than a school culture.
  - It is not stagnant and can change, but it is slow to evolve.
- Culture can be a barrier to the improvement process.





# Connections

## Center for School Turnaround

Domain 4: *Culture Shift* and Assessing District Readiness Practice 4A: Build a strong community intensely focused on student learning

## State and reiterate high expectations.

The district champions high expectations (of self and others), embeds them in everyday practice and language, and reinforces them through shared accountability and follow-through on strategies for dramatically improving student outcomes.



# A Culture for Learning

## Characteristics

- Reflects the importance placed on content and of learning
  - Expectations for learning and achievement are visible and woven into all actions. There is a belief that students have the ability to succeed.
  - Promotes individual success and pride in work
  - “Outward and inward” focus on high expectations
- *Policies, procedures, and practices support these characteristics. They are not limited to the classroom - this is a district/school-wide focus.*



# A Culture for Learning in the Classroom



- Passion and excitement
- Accountability and work ethic
- High expectations, rigor, cognitive demanding atmosphere
  - HOT questioning
  - Academic language
  - Reflection
  - Metacognitive conversations
  - Collaboration
  - Critical thinking
  - Think-alouds
  - Self-assessment
  - Revisions and iterative work opportunities
  - Creating agency (pride in work)
  - High cognitive energy is present







*"I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say!"*



**"Take out your phones. Open the American History app and turn to the page about George Washington."**

## Six Principles of Effective Schools

### Principle 1: Effective Leadership

Effective leaders maintain a strong moral compass and shape a vision of academic success for all students. They analyze and attack challenges and manage systems to position the school and students to achieve at high levels. They set clear, measurable and attainable goals. They create a cadre of high-quality teachers and cultivate leadership in others.

### Principle 2: Effective Teachers and Instruction

Effective instruction occurs with quality teaching in a student-centered, safe environment where there are high expectations for all students to succeed. Teachers have a solid knowledge of the content they teach and a common understanding of the content standards and curricula. It includes intentional planning and emphasizes evidence-based best practices for teaching and learning. It also requires teachers to have a strong understanding of the assessment system and how to use data to make instructional decisions for all students.

### Principle 3: Effective Organization of Time

Effective schools organize their time to support the vision of academic success for all students. Students have appropriate instructional and non-instructional time to support their learning and growth. Teachers have sufficient time to engage in professional learning, collaboration, and planning to support their students and their professional practice.

### Principle 4: Effective Curriculum

Effective curricula are evidence-based resources used for teaching and learning aligned to Arizona standards in all content areas. Districts and schools adopt local curricula. An effective curriculum ensures a continuum of inclusive, equitable and challenging learning opportunities, high expectations for learning and access to a well-rounded education for all learners.

### Principle 5: Conditions, Climate and Culture

Inclusive schools are conducive to student learning, fulfillment, and well-being, as well as professional satisfaction, morale, and effectiveness. Students, parents, teachers, and the community are engaged in the school's mission. School conditions, climate, culture, as do other influences such as the local community, the policies that govern how it operates, and the school's founding principles. School conditions, climate, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions.

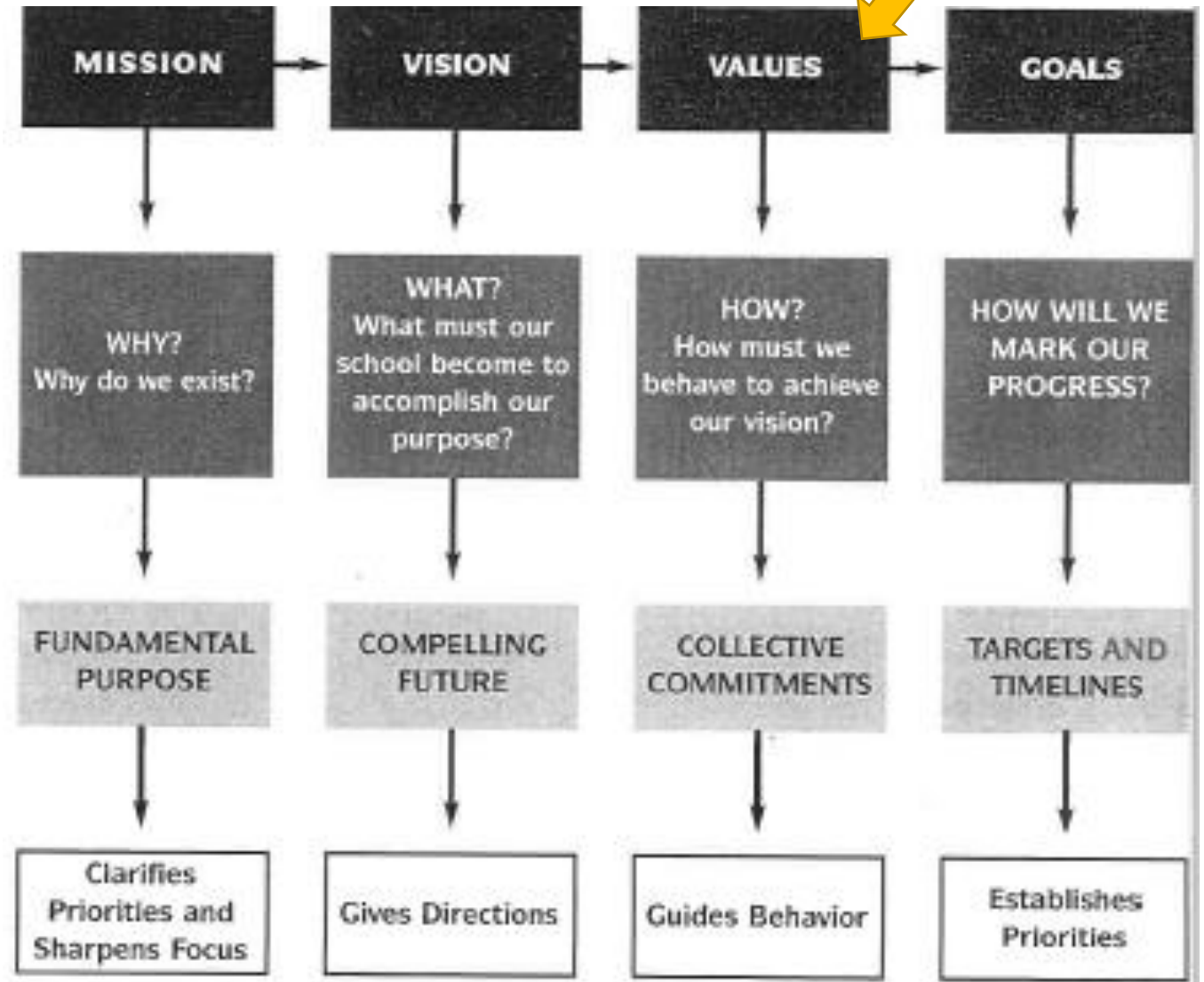
They also encompass concrete issues such as student physical and emotional safety, a healthy school environment, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, ethnic, linguistic, academic, and cultural diversity.

### Principle 6: Family and Community Engagement

Family and Community Engagement is an essential component of improving outcomes for children and youth. Effective family and community engagement is a shared responsibility to foster children's development and learning.









# Who is on your team?

- Believer – Culture for Learning is reflected in what they say and do
- Tweener – May reflect someone who is new, compliant, not fully invested
- Survivor – Punching a time clock. Little investment or effort
- Fundamentalist – Resistant to change, can be both positive and negative

Anthony Muhammad, 2009



# What a Culture for Learning looks at the school/organization level.

- Clear, shared vision (purpose for what you do and why)
- Collaborative processes
- Action plan cycle (evaluate-plan-implement-evaluate...)
- Promoting personal best (skill mastery and growth development)
- Ensuring supports and resources are available and accessible
- Conducive environments
- Accountability and professionalism for (self and others)
- Leadership









# Can you measure a Culture for Learning?

## Climate

- School quality reviews & surveys (views/perceptions)
  - Student
  - Parent
  - Staff
  - Teaching and learning environment
  - Safety environment
  - Family engagement

## Culture

- Formal data
  - Test scores
  - Formal site/classroom observations
  - Discipline
  - Teacher retention
  - Enrollment

*\*Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA)*



# What is your purpose?

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- Values
- Environment
- Attire
- Interactions
- Routines
- Traditions, rituals, ceremonies
- Leaders



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